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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE: MIDDLE EAST CONSULTATIONS, FEBRUARY
18

¶1. (SBU) This is an action message. USUN is authorized to draw from points in para 2-4 below as a basis for its participation in Security Council consultations on the Middle East scheduled for February 18, and for its public statements on the consultation.

¶2. (U) Talking points.

-- Thank Special Coordinator Serry.

-- The United States has already moved to reinvigorate its efforts to achieve a comprehensive resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict based on two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

-- President Obama and Secretary Clinton are firmly committed to this objective. On the second full day of the Administration, they named a distinguished special envoy, who immediately traveled to the region to hear the views of the parties, to help consolidate the ceasefire in Gaza, and to ensure that the humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza are being met.

-- Special Envoy Mitchell will continue to carry forward this commitment with vigorous, determined diplomacy. He will be returning to the region soon. We seek a comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbors that respects Israel's rightful place in the community of nations.

-- With respect to Gaza, our goal remains a durable and fully-respected ceasefire. This entails:

-- a) an end to all violence, hostilities and acts of terrorism, including rocket, mortar and other attacks on Israel;

-- b) preventing the rearming of Hamas, including an end to illicit Hamas smuggling of arms and ammunition into Gaza, and intensifying member states' efforts to prevent Hamas from replenishing its arsenal;

-- c) reopening the Gaza border crossings on a controlled, sustained and continuous basis, with an appropriate monitoring regime with international and Palestinian Authority participation, consistent with the November 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

-- A durable ceasefire in Gaza would make it far easier to resume serious negotiations toward a two-state solution, as described in UNSC Resolution 1850 and called for in numerous Security Council resolutions. As noted in UNSC Resolutions 1850 and 1860, both Israel and the Palestinians have obligations to fulfill.

-- As we strive for a permanent and sustainable ceasefire, we remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

-- In addition to the \$600 million the United States provided in assistance to the Palestinians last year, including \$185 million for UNRWA, we have provided approximately \$61 million in emergency assistance in Fiscal Year 2009 through UNRWA, ICRC, WFP, and NGOs. This assistance will help provide food, temporary shelter, non-food items, and emergency health care for the people of Gaza. Additionally, we have contributed \$60 million this year to UNRWA's General Fund for its core health and education programs in all five fields of operation.

-- The United States strongly supports Egypt's call for an international donors' conference in Cairo on March 2 to facilitate Gaza's recovery and strengthen the Palestinian economy in both the West Bank and Gaza. We plan to be represented at a high level and urge others to show similar support for Egypt's initiative.

-- The United States sees the March 2 conference as an opportunity to address -- along with other donors and international organizations -- immediate humanitarian needs in Gaza, and to support the Palestinian Authority's plan for the reconstruction of Gaza as an integral part of a future Palestinian state.

-- We hope that conditions on the ground will allow the United States and other members of the international community to provide substantial levels of assistance to the people of Gaza.

-- We strongly support President Mubarak's efforts, including his invitation to leaders of Palestinian factions to join in reconciliation talks in Cairo starting February 22, and we urge others to back these efforts.

-- A better life for the Palestinian people, including the people of Gaza, can be assured only in the context of a Palestinian Authority with which the international community and Israel can work. Naturally, this would be a Palestinian Authority that rejects violence, recognizes Israel's right to exist, and abides by past agreements. These are necessary elements for Palestinian statehood and for the unity of the West Bank and Gaza.

-- We believe that the Quartet remains the most effective instrument for furthering the international community's engagement, including the engagement of the Secretary General, in efforts to bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

-- The United States strongly supports the engagement of UN Agencies in addressing urgent humanitarian needs in Gaza. We are reviewing the February 2 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) document and expect to be in a position to give it our strong support.

End Talking Points.

13. (U) Possible additional talking point, for use only if developments warrant:

-- We congratulate President Mubarak and Egyptian officials on their success in arranging a longer-term truce in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. This is a important step toward a lasting, sustainable peace.

14. (U) Possible additional talking points, if time permits:

-- While our primary focus remains on Gaza, we should not lose sight of developments in Lebanon. The international community's commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and independence must revolve around full implementation of

UNSC Resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), including an end to weapons smuggling and the disarmament of all militias, including Hizballah. We should also raise our voices in support of democratic forces in Lebanon.

-- Last week President Obama and Secretary Clinton commemorated the fourth anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. We are confident that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, scheduled for its formal launching on March 1, will bring to justice those responsible for financing, planning and perpetrating this heinous crime.

End Talking Points.
CLINTON